

BRANCHING OUT

Creating Connections to End Sexual Violence

Winter 2009

Volume 3, Issue 3

Happy 10-Year Anniversary to SAS!

By Terri DeWalt



Hello everyone!

After spending the past year completing an internship at the University of St Thomas in St Paul, MN, I am excited to have returned to Sexual Assault Services (SAS). The past year has been filled with many adventures and changes in my life, and I am excited to return to a program that I know and love.

I am also excited to return to SAS in time to acknowledge and celebrate our 10-year anniversary of supporting sexual assault survivors in Racine County. I am honored to have been a part of the SAS journey for eight of the past ten years and wanted to take this opportunity to reflect on the program's history and some of its accomplishments.

Sexual Assault Services, a program of Lutheran Social Services, was established after the Department of Justice recognized that Racine was one of the few counties in the state of Wisconsin that did not have what is called a "Sexual Assault Service Provider" (SASP). A SASP is a rape crisis center responsible for providing a core set of services to sexual assault and abuse survivors. Despite the fact that Racine is one of the largest counties in the state and that many SASPs around the state were established during the 1970's, as of 1998, we did not yet have a rape crisis center.

Thankfully, as a result of the perseverance, vision, and courage of a number of key individuals, SAS was established in January of 1999.

When SAS began, the program consisted of one half-time position. This half time position was responsible for establishing a 24-hour crisis line, recruiting a team of volunteers to respond to the hospital 24 hours a day, provide crisis counseling and support groups to victims and their families as well as provide community education and awareness. Somehow, one by one, these tasks were completed, and by July of 1999 the 24-hour crisis line and Hospital Response Team were established.

Thankfully, SAS' funding increased in the year 2000, and we were able to hire our first full-time position. I was fortunate enough to become a member of the SAS team in 2001 and was then joined by our second full time staff person in October of 2002. A year later, in October of 2003, SAS received funding to open our Burlington outreach office. With that funding we hired our Rural Services Coordinator and in December of 2003 the doors of our Rural Outreach office in Love, Inc. were opened and we began providing 24-hour crisis response to Burlington Memorial Hospital. Since that time we have added a Family Support Advocate who provides services at the Child Advocacy Center and a Bilingual Advocate who provides services and outreach to members of the Latino community in Racine County. (See the next page for a more comprehensive look back on SAS' history and a summary of all the people we have served).

At this point in time, SAS employs six people, including Katy Adler our Program Coordinator & Therapist, Vicki Biehn the Rural Service Coordinator & Therapist, Reggie Poepping our Crisis Response Advocate, Rosa Salinas Hultman our Bilingual Advocate, Samantha Sustachek our CAC Family Support Advocate, and myself.

This dedicated team works every day towards the dual purpose of providing support to the sexual assault survivors in Racine County and doing our part to end sexual violence in our community. If you ever have any questions about the SAS program, or are interested in helping support our work by becoming a Volunteer Advocate, please feel free to contact me at tdewalt@lsswis.org or by calling our office at (262) 619-1634. Thank you!

— Terri

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A* Look B*ack at SAS' 10 Year History*

January 1999

SAS was established as Racine County's Sexual Assault Service Provider with a half time position from a Sexual Assault Victim Services (SAVS) grant from the Department of Justice.

January 2000

SAVS funding was increased to one full time position.

August 2001

Terri DeWalt joined SAS as the Program Coordinator.

October 2002

SAS received a second fulltime position, this time from the Victim of Crime Act grant (VOCA).

October 2003

SAS received a half time position from VOCA to provide services to victims in western Racine County.

December 2003

Love, Inc. became the home of our Burlington Outreach Office.

November 2004

The Racine County Sexual Assault Response Team was formed.

August 2005

SAS received funding from the United Way of Racine County to hire a third Therapist & a Crisis Response Worker.

December 2006

SAS expanded its offices to include a waiting room and an office for the Program Coordinator.

July 1999

Racine County's 24-Hour Sexual Assault Crisis Line: (262) 637- SAFE was established. For the first 10 months, the Crisis Line was staffed entirely by paid staff.

May 2000

The first Volunteer Advocates were trained to cover with the 24- hour Crisis Line and respond 24-hours a day to Wheaton Franciscan Hospital (then St. Luke's).

January 2003

SAS moved from its first home at Next Generation Now to its current home on the 3rd floor of the Mound Avenue Business Center.

November 2003

Vicki Biehn joined SAS as the Rural Services Coordinator.

February 2004

Another Team of Volunteers was formed. The Rural Hospital Response Team began responding to Burlington Memorial Hospital.

June 2005

Samantha Sustachek joined the SAS team as the Volunteer & Community Education Coordinator.

January 2006

SAS began providing the Sexual Abuse Treatment program funded by United Way of Racine County.

August 2007

Received funding from the United Way of Racine County to hire a quarter time legal advocate.

July 2008

SAS received funding from the United Way of Racine County to hire a haltime Family Support Advocate to provide advocacy services to the families and children seen at the CAC.

May 2009

Reggie Poepping joined SAS as the Crisis Response Advocate.

October 2009

SAS received funding from the Violence Against Women Act grant (VAWA) to hire a .70 FTE Bilingual Advocate.

June 2008

The Racine County Child Advocacy Center (CAC) opened.

July 2008

Katy Adler joined SAS as the Program Coordinator during Terri's year long educational leave of absence.

August 2009

SAS received VOCA Recovery Act funding for the second half of the Family Support Advocate's position at the Child Advocacy Center.

December 2009

Rosa Salinas Hultman joined SAS as the first paid Bilingual Advocate.



SAS By the Numbers

A Compilation of 10 Years of Statistics*

Crisis Line Calls.....	2,107
Hospital Visits (Racine & Burlington).....	570
People Served at Hospital.....	1,055
Legal Advocacy Sessions.....	332
Counseling Clients.....	524
Counseling Sessions.....	4,300
People at Community Presentations.....	11,166

*Statistics recorded beginning in 2000. Current through November 2009.



Legislative Update

By Vicki Biehn

I am pleased to announce that there are quite a few items to update you on for this newsletter. The Wisconsin Coalition Against Sexual Assault (WCASA) and The Wisconsin Coalition Against Domestic Violence (WCADV) have been very busy during this legislative session working to improve the lives of sexual assault, domestic violence and stalking victims in our state.

The Victim Fair Housing Act-AB277/SB204 is a bill that bars discrimination in housing matters due to status as a victim of sexual assault, domestic violence, or stalking. This bill was passed by both houses of legislature and is awaiting the Governor's signature.

The Lock Out Abuser Act-AB400/SB274 has passed the Assembly and is awaiting Senate action. This bill requires landlords to change locks or allow a victim to change locks within 48 hours of victim request. The victim must prove victim status by providing legal documentation of the abuse such as a copy of a restraining order, criminal complaint or condition of release.

The Child Victims Act-AB453/SB319 removes the statute of limitations in civil cases for child sexual assault victims. The current statute of limitations is when the victim reaches the age of 35. This bill creates a 3-year "window of opportunity" to bring a civil case for those currently barred from doing so because of the current statute of limitations. This bill has passed out of the Assembly committee and is awaiting action by the full Assembly and Senate committee action.

The Victim Privacy Act-AB419 is a bill that creates Civil Rape Shield in Wisconsin. The bill will prohibit evidence of prior sexual conduct of the victim in civil cases with narrow exceptions. This bill will also prohibit a court from ordering a victim to submit to a mental examination to assess her/his credibility as a condition of allowing the victim to testify and generally prohibits a criminal defendant from requiring a victim to submit to pretrial interview or deposition. This bill also makes any personally identifiable information about the victim in Crime Victim Compensation or SAFE fund applications confidential and not a public record. This bill has passed in the full Assembly and is awaiting committee action in the Senate.

The Video Voyeurism Act-AB411/SB281 bill provides judges with the option to require defendants to register as a sex offender if the crime was "sexually motivated." This bill has passed out of Senate committee and is awaiting action by the full Senate and Assembly.

The Healthy Youth Act-AB458/SB324 bill requires school districts that offer sex education programming to provide comprehensive programming, not limited to abstinence only education. The programming must be medically accurate, age appropriate, and address healthy

relationships. The programming must also identify counseling, medical and legal resources for survivors of sexual assault and dating violence. This bill has passed in Assembly and is awaiting action in the Senate.

If you wish to become more informed and involved with the legislative agenda from WCASA or WCADV please contact Ian Henderson at ianh@wcasa.org or Tony Gibart at tonyg@wcadv.org and ask to be added to the action alert list. When you are added to this list, you will receive e-mails that alert you when action is needed on your part. Usually, you will be asked to call or e-mail your representative and ask them to support or not support a certain bill. The action that you are asked to do usually only takes a couple of minutes. I always feel empowered and energized when I take these actions.

If you have any questions or concerns, feel free to give me a call at 262-763-6226 ext 31 or vbiehn@lsswis.org.

— Vicki

Call For Submissions...



If you are a survivor or you know a survivor who would like to submit a poem, short story, artwork or editorial for publication in this newsletter, please email it to Samantha Sustachek (ssustachek@lsswis.org).



Face To Face

By Lora Schultz Reinders

After four years as a staff member of Sexual Assault Services I will be leaving my position here and wanted to express my gratitude to all of you who I have worked with through the years. I first began as a volunteer advocate in 2003, and then became an employee in 2005, working as a therapist once I completed my Master's Degree. Eventually I added on responsibility as a legal advocate. I have enjoyed working with those of you in the community I have encountered through the Child Advocacy Center, SART, and legal system. I am continuing my psychotherapy career at Pathways Consulting, LLC in Kenosha, and can be contacted there at 262-652-7222. It has been wonderful to work with such a dedicated staff at Sexual Assault Services as well as all of you in the Racine Community working to end sexual violence.

— Lora



Helping Hands

By Katy Adler

Our volunteers make Sexual Assault Services the program that it is. For this issue, I would like to introduce you to Sandy DeWalt, one of our volunteers who has been with the program for 9 years.

Sandy is a retired middle school counselor and special education teacher. For years, she worked closely with students, often encountering adolescents who had experienced some type of sexual abuse or assault in their lives and would talk with Sandy about it. Sandy first discovered the SAS Volunteer Advocate program through an encounter like this with a student. A student at the middle school where Sandy was a counselor was sexually assaulted. She came and talked to Sandy, and told her about the advocate that had been present at the hospital and how much it had meant to her to have that support. Sandy thought that this could be a way that she could make a difference for a survivor, and began volunteering in October 2000. I asked Sandy a few questions about her experience as a Volunteer Advocate for SAS:

What do you think makes a person a good Volunteer Advocate?

Having the ability to listen, having empathy, being there in the moment with the survivor, and not taking it home with you.

What is the most rewarding part of being a Volunteer Advocate?

Being part of a group, making a difference when people are going through a terrible trauma, and knowing that you are part of something bigger, that you are giving back to the community.

Do you volunteer with any other community groups or agencies? If so, what do you do?

I am the President of the Caledonia Conservancy, which is a local land trust that works to preserve the rural character of Caledonia. We have 160+ acres of horse trails and hiking trails, in addition to another 28 miles of horse trails that are on private land. We maintain the trails, clean things up, and work to conserve the land. Everyday I am doing something for the Conservancy.

What are some of your other interests and hobbies?

I like to knit, do stained glass, garden, read, take care of my family and my mother. I also love horses (I see them 2-3 times a week.)

How has being a Volunteer Advocate influenced your family?

I was an advocate before my daughter, Terri, became involved with Sexual Assault Services; I told her about the opening in the program as she was finishing grad school. I am proud of my daughter, as well as my son and husband.

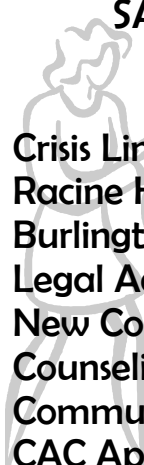
Any other information you would like to share?

People say, "Oh there is so much sexual assault and sexual abuse in the world," but I think what is happening is that people are realizing

that they don't have to put up with assault or abuse, that they can put a stop to it and have better lives. Once, a 7th grade girl disclosed sexual abuse to me. I attempted to reach her mother and eventually her grandmother, and was having difficulty. It turned out that her mother and her grandmother had been sexually abused in the past and had never told about it, abuse was always a hidden thing in the family. This 7th grade girl put a stop to it by telling about the abuse. People now are saying, "I don't have to put up with this, this is wrong." In addition, we now have the systems in place to make the abuse stop, and having support helps. I know I can't change the world, but a little bit at a time helps. Every little thing you do makes a difference.

— Katy

SAS Third Quarter Statistics July—September 2009



Crisis Line Calls.....	55
Racine Hospital Visits.....	18
Burlington Hospital Visits.....	0
Legal Advocacy Sessions.....	24
New Counseling Clients.....	23
Counseling Sessions.....	133
Community Presentations.....	4
CAC Appointments.....	44



Meet Rosa!

Born and raised in Racine – Daughter of migrant farmworkers who settled in Racine – Community activist.

Who am I? Rosa Salinas-Hultman. I have joined Sexual Assault Services as the Bilingual Outreach Advocate. This new position will keep me out and about in the community. I will be giving out information about our agency and the services we provide in both English and Spanish, not only at the kitchen table but also at community organizations and agency meetings. The Latino/Hispanic community has grown through recent years and has changed since the days my parents and their friends decided to stay and build their families here. My co-workers and I want to be the support in times of need for all of our community.

— Rosa



Family Advocate

By Samantha Sustachek

Approximately one out of three females and one out of six males will experience sexual assault or abuse in their lifetimes. These violations can and do happen to anyone, but unfortunately certain vulnerable populations are more likely to experience abuse. As much as we do not want to believe it to be true, children are one of those populations. So what can we do as parents, caregivers, and professionals when a child discloses abuse to us?

Stay calm. Hearing from a child that s/he has been sexually abused is upsetting and can be just as difficult (and sometimes even more difficult) to deal with for an adult who cares about that child as it is for the child her/himself. Remember that the child is observing your reaction to the disclosure and may shut down if s/he feels that s/he is upsetting you. One of the reasons children do not disclose sexual abuse is fear that adults will be upset or angry or sad.

Believe. Believing the child is critical. Another reason children (and adult survivors as well) do not tell about sexual abuse is a fear that they will not be believed or that they will be blamed for the abuse. An unfortunate myth exists in our culture that people make up stories of sexual assault and abuse while in reality multiple studies have shown the rate of false reporting to be very low (somewhere between 2 and 10 percent). Having people believe their initial disclosure is the first step towards healing for children who have experienced abuse.

Protect. Be sure the child is removed from the dangerous situation. Be sure s/he does not have contact with the abuser, and report the abuse to the proper authorities. Here in Racine County, a report should be called in to the Human Services Department at 262-638-7720. The police can also be contacted for help (be sure to contact the department that corresponds with the jurisdiction in which the abuse occurred), and if the situation is an emergency, call 911. HSD or the police will decide whether or not the child should be evaluated at the Racine County Child Advocacy Center (CAC).

Don't investigate. Try not to ask the child too many questions. Children are suggestible and may tell you what they think you want to hear if you ask a leading question. In addition, asking too many questions or forcing a child to recount details of the abuse repeatedly can be very traumatic for the child and may interfere with the investigation. If the child wants to talk to you about the incident, listen and support the child, but leave the investigation to HSD and the police.

Reassure. The child needs to know that her/his problems are important to you, and that s/he did the right thing by telling about the abuse. The child may also need reassurance that the abuse was not her/his fault.

Get help. Sexual assault and abuse are difficult to handle by your-

self. A child who has been abused should certainly receive medical care to be sure s/he did not suffer any physical damage, but emotional damage is a consideration as well. Counseling with a professional therapist who has experience with sexual abuse issues will go a long way toward helping the child and her/his family cope with the abuse. If the child visits the CAC, her/his family will be given information about counseling at Children's Service Society and Sexual Assault Services (SAS). A child does not have to be seen at the CAC to take advantage of these programs, however. If you are looking for counseling for a child, feel free to call SAS at 262-619-1634, and we will be happy to provide you with a referral.

As difficult as child sexual abuse can be for a child and the adults who care about her/him, the good news is that children are resilient. By properly responding to a child who has just disclosed abuse to you, you can start that child on the path to healing. With the proper help, care, and compassion, a child who has been sexually abused can go on to live a perfectly normal, happy life, and every child should have that opportunity.

This article is based on the National Child Traumatic Stress Network's factsheet, "What to Do If Your Child Discloses Sexual Abuse." For more information and resources regarding child sexual abuse, see the NCTSN's website at www.NCTSN.org. They have excellent fact-sheets available about many aspects of child sexual abuse.

— Sam

***Are you a caregiver of a child
who has been sexually abused?
Are you looking for support and healing?***

We may have what you are looking for.

**Sexual Assault Services of Lutheran Social Services
is currently offering a support group for
non-offending caregivers of children who have
been sexually abused.**

The support group is a place where you can...

- Explore how the abuse has affected your child and your family.
- Learn about how to help your child and family heal.
- Reduce feelings of isolation and aloneness.
- Have your feelings and experiences acknowledged and accepted.
- Receive support from other caregivers and provide support to them.

Please call Sexual Assault Services at 262-619-1634 to register for the group. All group members will need to meet with the facilitator before beginning the group for an orientation session. The group is confidential and provided at no cost.



Sexual Assault Services
1220 Mound Ave., Suite 304
Racine, WI 53404

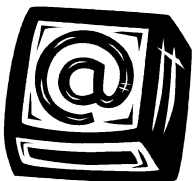
Contact Us!

SAS Racine Office
1220 Mound Ave. Suite 304
Racine, WI 53404
262-619-1634

SAS Burlington Office
480 S. Pine St.
Burlington, WI 53105
262-763-6226 Ext. 31

24 Hour Crisis Line: 262-637-SAFE (7233)

Stay Connected!



Join our News and Events email update list! Would you like to receive information on upcoming SAS events and volunteer opportunities? Email Samantha Sustachek at ssustachek@lsswis.org with "SAS news and events" in the subject line and she will include you in all SAS news and events related emails.

Sexual Assault Services seeks to create a safe and compassionate environment to help promote the healing of sexual assault survivors and their support people.

